

POLICE

Thursday, May 18, 1967

AFFECTIONATELY REMEMBERED

At ground-breaking ceremonies for the new Duxbury Police Station, the late Chief Lawrence Doyle turned to a group:

"You know, fellows," he said, "I've waited a long time for this."

During the construction, Chief Doyle dropped in to see his old boss, former Chief James O'Neill, Duxbury's first police chief. O'Neill was in 1931 the Duxbury Police Department. His cruiser was a motorcycle. Then came Patrolmen Earl Chandler and Lawrence Doyle, both of whom were to succeed him as chief. The fourth member of the force was the late Elmer Phillips.

"They are all gone now," Chief O'Neill told the Clipper editor Monday morning. "All younger than I, and all gone."

We could tell he was grieved. Chief Doyle had smilingly invited him to drop into the new station for a game of cribbage.

All three Duxbury police chiefs fought for better working conditions for members of the local force. And it was not until the tenure of Lawrence Doyle that the taxpayers agreed that a new police station was long overdue.

They voted for it, and it is built. But it is not complete. And it won't be complete until it includes a memorial plaque or a memorial room or some other fitting memorial to a kind, patient, unselfish public servant who was always moderate in his desires and courteous in his requests.

Chief Doyle was a gentleman of understanding. "No editor -- or police chief -- can afford to tell in print all he knows," we once said to him.

"If we did," he smiled, "a lot of folks might have to leave town."

In our book, CANCEL MY SUBSCRIPTION, PLEASE! we wrote a chapter on police news and its processing. Excerpts:

"From 1925 until 1931, Constable James O'Neill, who had to buy his own uniform and Indian Chief motorcycle, was paid a dollar an hour for an eight-hour day. He worked only from Memorial Day to Labor Day and was busiest during summers when out-of-towners parked on the wooden half-mile bridge spanning the bay to Duxbury Beach. One summer, a Brockton collector stole antiques from 26 houses owned by wealthy summer residents, and Constable O'Neill caught him, after discovering loot behind a lilac hedge. Summer residents clamored for more police protection, and, as a result, O'Neill became Duxbury's first police chief in 1931....

"In 1932, Constable Earl Chandler joined the force, and by 1934 Duxbury had a three-man police department, when Lawrence Doyle bought himself a uniform.

"Two-way radios had not yet come into use, and methods of communication were only slightly more advanced than Indian smoke signals. Anyone in trouble telephoned the Central Fire Station, where the night man on duty blinked lights three times all over town. This was the signal for Chandler or Doyle to stop their cruiser at the nearest house with a telephone, call Chief O'Neill for instructions, and speed to the scene. The system annoyed the electric company, which found its bulbs wearing out more quickly, but it was a boon to night prowlers, who hid behind lilac hedges or bans until the alert was over.

"Not until 1936 did the police department have adequate quarters in its present building across the street from the Town Offices. Adequate during the summer, that is. Since they were unheated, the police had to use the cubicle next to the tax collector's office in winter....

"During the summer a police officer is stationed at the end of the wooden bridge leading to Duxbury Beach. One afternoon, when a rookie patrolman was on duty there, Police Chief Doyle left his private car in a no-parking area for a few minutes. A moment later a police cruiser crossed the bridge, and the officer at the wheel, while the rookie's back was turned, tagged the chief's car.

"So this is your idea of a joke, is it?" Chief Doyle said when he returned.

"The rookie flushed. 'Honest, Chief, I didn't put that ticket on your car.'

"Did you know it was my car?"

"Well, no.... And honest, I have no idea how that tag got onto your windshield."

"You should have put it there." The chief suppressed a grin. "Certain responsibilities go with that badge you are wearing, son. Meanwhile, keep your eyes open and see that nobody steals the bridge."

That was Larry Doyle....kind, patient, with a wonderful sense of humor. He was quick to help and slow to condemn, for he learned from long experience to understand people.

He will always be affectionately remembered by those who were lucky enough to know him.